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SUBJECT: KUNDUZ GOVERNOR NERVOUS AS SECURITY TRENDS NEGATIVE

REF: KABUL 841

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Although the violence in Kunduz Province has not reached levels found elsewhere in Afghanistan, security incidents are on the rise. Increasingly organized and deadly insurgent attacks throughout the summer and autumn have frayed the nerves of officials in Kunduz Province. Regular rocket, improvised explosive device (IED) and suicide attacks against the PRT, combined with sophisticated assaults against ANP positions, have increasingly frustrated Kunduz Governor Mohammad Omar, who feels the needs of the Northeast are neglected. Under increasing pressure, Omar has traveled to Kabul to lobby for more resources. He used the occasion also to meet with the Ambassador to underscore his concerns.

12. (SBU) A number of high-profile attacks against coalition forces throughout the summer and autumn underscore what has been a troubling year for PRT Kunduz. Earlier in the year, Berlin dispatched a 200-strong airborne infantry company to shore up near-perimeter security after a series of rocket attacks on the PRT in the latter half of 2007 (REFTEL). While this temporarily neutralized the immediate threat, their numbers were reduced in June to 120 and rocket attacks resumed in August. That same month, an IED killed one German soldier and wounded three. In October, a suicide bomber killed two German soldiers on patrol. Five Afghan children were also killed in the attack. So far this year, five suicide bombers in Kunduz Province have attacked German forces. All three German military deaths in Afghanistan this year occurred in Kunduz's Chahar Dara District.

13. (SBU) Afghan security forces have been plagued with a series of personnel changes, resource limitations and disruptions which have strained efforts to effectively combat increasingly sophisticated insurgent activity in Kunduz. In July, Chief of Police Mohammad Ayoub Salangi transferred to Kabul and was replaced in August by General Rizzaq Ayuby. While General Rizzaq, who served as temporary Police Chief of Kabul from April to August, has made an impression as an innovator, he has yet to firmly establish himself. Also this summer, the ANP was compelled to dissolve its 100-man protective detail, used to guard NGO and international facilities, in order to shore up the dwindling number of regular ANP soldiers caused by this summer's Tashqil enforcement. Further straining ANP resources is the regular seconding of ANP troops to troubled provinces further south.

14. (SBU) In September, the Afghan Army replaced the 2nd Kandak (battalion). Newly arrived in the province, the 3rd Kandak was quickly dispatched to Badakhshan and Takhar Provinces in support of the Voter Registration process. The 360 man Kandak is widely seen

as stretched too thin, as its area of responsibility includes Baghlan, Badakhshan, Kunduz and Takhar Provinces. The arrival of the new Kandak has also created structural difficulties in its relationship with the PRT. Whereas the previous Kandak's German Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT) was well integrated with the PRT command structure, the Croatian OMLT has found communication more difficult, at times straining coordination efforts.

15. (SBU) In recent weeks, the ANP has found itself on the defensive as attacks have become increasingly sophisticated. A frontal assault on the Chahar Dara District Headquarters, while without casualties, was notable in its utilization of a classic three-point attack strategy. The newly appointed Police Chief of Chahar Dara District was attacked by an IED, had to seek medical treatment in India and has just recently returned. In addition, the technical level of attacks has increased, with the recent introduction of jammer-proof IEDs to the province. Provincial officials have responded to the increased disruption in Chahar Dara by dispatching 50 extra ANP, NDS and ANA personnel to the district to supplement existing ANSF forces.

16. (SBU) The picture, however, is not entirely bleak. While the ANA and ANP personnel changes were disruptive, the new ANA Commander and ANP Chief have made a positive impression. The ANP's General Rizzaq, for example, has worked closely with the U.S. Army CSTC-A Police Mentoring Team to train a "Quick Reaction Force" of up to 50 officers who will be able to conduct operations throughout the district. Baghlan Province is now also considering a similar, though shorter, training program. Chahar Dara and Imam Sahib Districts are now also completing their Focused District Development

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training cycle, with Khanabad District the next to be trained. This program has brought about a noticeable increase in morale and effectiveness. Most importantly, there are signs the general public does not want to move down the road to insurgency, despite ongoing insurgent intimidation campaigns. A recent suicide plot directed against ISAF forces unraveled when villagers in Khanabad District overpowered the handler, who is now in NDS custody. The suicide attacker himself exploded on his motorbike far from his potential victims (SEPTEL).

17. (SBU) Local officials remain frustrated by the lack of resources and the belief the Taliban are now targeting Kunduz Province for destabilization on a priority basis. Governor Omar has expressed disappointment with German tactics, as IED and suicide incidents increase and joint security activities yield few results. He believes the German forces are too conservative in their methods and when the PRT acts, it is only with large numbers after days of preparation, allowing insurgent forces plenty of time to vacate an area. Omar has repeatedly expressed the need to set up a multi-lateral quick reaction force to quickly act upon intelligence.

NDS Chief Majid, for his part, lays blame with the judicial system and has ready anecdotes of arrested insurgents being subsequently released due to corrupt and frightened officials. Governor Omar recently traveled to Kabul for additional reserve policemen, funding to reinstate the ANP protection unit and an ANA Kandak devoted to Kunduz Province alone.

18. (SBU) While in Kabul, Governor Omar also met on November 16 with the Ambassador to reiterate his concerns. He said the Taliban has decided to target his province because it previously was one of its military and political bases, many TB supporters had escaped following the Taliban's fall and those people continued to provide backing. He also cited poverty as a factor influencing some popular attitudes. Omar indicated that while in Kabul he was approaching both MOI and NDS to request help. The Ambassador said he would speak to Minister of Interior Atmar regarding the law enforcement presence in Kunduz but would of course support the Minister's decisions.

19. COMMENT: Although one of the longest serving governors in Afghanistan, Omar faces these worsening security challenges at a time when he is widely perceived as weak and increasingly disconnected. Omar's frustration ultimately lies in his inability

to respond effectively to escalating security concerns with his limited resources. Lack of ANSF manpower, the drying up of actionable intelligence due to insurgent intimidation, the continued power wielded by local strongmen and a weak government infrastructure all contribute to his security problems. This year's opening of Kunduz's Joint Provincial Coordination Center, CSTC-A and EUPOL mentoring of ANP forces and continuing joint-action exercises and operations with the German PRT have all worked to raise the level of ANSF operational effectiveness. Without the resources to build on these successes, however, Omar will continue to feel hemmed in and his position remains unstable.

WOOD